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Turning from such incomplete proofs of motive for these works of the middle period, one finds many stimulating comments upon the writings attributed to Mrs. Haywood's declining years. Appreciative, but cautious, estimates are offered of her share in the *Spectator* tradition, of her contribution to the foundling literature preceding *Tom Jones*, and of her part in forming the English domestic novel. The study closes with a concrete statement of conclusions. The author thereupon bids farewell to this daughter of Venus and sister of Minerva. Having written "the obituary of her works," if nothing more, he rests content. Toilsome research among these heaps of "perishable literature" could not dull either his sense of humor or his appreciation of literary values.

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*Chaucer and His Poetry.* By GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1915.

This volume consists in the main of a series of brilliant and sometimes highly ingenious interpretations of certain representative works of Chaucer. Coming from the pen of such a keen and original student of Chaucer as Professor Kittredge, whose reading and comprehension of the poet's work are illumined by a knowledge of mediaeval life and literary art almost unsurpassed, the book is naturally not a labored, documented manual, intended primarily to familiarize comparatively elementary students with a summary of preceding investigation. It is, on the contrary, a series of highly original contributions, depending, to some extent, on the researches of the author's predecessors, but interpreting many things entirely anew, and emphasizing the importance and significance of much that has hitherto been neglected or overlooked.

In chap. i, on "The Man and His Times," Professor Kittredge, under the guise of attacking and disposing of certain current misapprehensions concerning Chaucer and the fourteenth century, manages to call the attention of the general reader to much knowledge that will be new to him, or at least that has hitherto been ignored in its bearing on the activities of the poet. He properly objects to the smug characterization of the Middle Ages, and especially of the fourteenth century, as credulous and blindly submissive to authority, as slavish to the deductive method and ignorant of the inductive method. He objects to the conventionally taught theory that mediaeval writers were unrestrained by the laws and precepts of literary art, and as a result produced work lacking in proportion or plan. He holds (in conformity with his later and fuller treatment of the *Canterbury Tales*) that many of the so-called digressions of Chaucer are due to the inherently "dramatic" character of the tales, and are motivated by the character or the

purpose of the narrator or by the situation. He reinterprets the trite division of Chaucer's career into French, Italian, and English periods, pointing out that it is true that in the first period the poet was a typical French love poet writing in the English language, but that the Italian period was one of intellectual and artistic emancipation and emulation; while the English period was English not because of submission to English fashions or because of inspiration drawn from English authors, but because Chaucer was dealing with English subject-matter. Further, he points out how this pat little analysis, as generally taught, overlooks the fact that Chaucer carried with him into the later periods all the equipment and technique that he had previously acquired. Finally, he inserts a fourth period, one of transition between the French and the Italian. The chapter closes with an attempt to show what glimpses we may catch of Chaucer the man from the few authentic personal references that exist in his poems.

The structure of the remainder of the book follows the division of Chaucer's literary career into four periods. One work illustrative of each is fully discussed—the *Book of the Duchess* for the French, the *House of Fame* for the Transition, *Troilus* for the Italian, and the *Canterbury Tales* for the English. Everywhere we meet fresh interpretations, new material, revelations from hitherto unattained points of view. Again and again we find Professor Kittredge proceeding on the certainty never before so concisely and directly phrased as on p. 151: "*Chaucer always knew what he was about.*" He holds false the charge that Chaucer was guilty of bad art because of lack of control over method, intention, or material. He believes the evident *naïveté* of the *Book of the Duchess*, for example, is not Chaucer's, but that of the dreamer, a fictitious character, whom the poet has deliberately drawn as *naïf* because that suits the artistry of the plan (cf. pp. 45, 50–53).

It is in this chapter also that we find (pp. 54–68) the prettiest utilization possible of a considerable amount of work on sources by preceding students. Mere source hunters have received their share of opprobrium, but here we see their results properly appreciated by a master. The labor of a source hunter is not finished when he has indicated an indebtedness. The important point always is: How did the author use or modify the structure or the material which he borrowed? How did these affect his art? How thoroughly has he assimilated and mastered his borrowings? How intensely has he visualized and vitalized them in his own treatment? In short, how do the differences between source and writer exhibit the power of the latter? This Professor Kittredge has shown here, and in his study of the *Troilus* and elsewhere. Indeed, this is one of the most noteworthy features of the book.

By calling attention to the fact that the *Troilus* is "an elaborate psychological novel," "a tragedy of character," composed with full regard to

the system of courtly love; by interpreting the poem and the characters in the light of his comprehension of mediaeval thought, Professor Kittredge has not only clarified and enriched our understanding of the poem, but he has given us a model for the treatment of similar problems.

In his treatment of the *Canterbury Tales*, his most important contribution consists in the attention that he has given to the links and the narrators. As we should expect from the author of "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage" (*Modern Philology*, IX, 435 ff.), his thesis is that by treating each tale as a separate literary unit, we have failed to recognize much that is pertinent and pregnant in Chaucer's literary art. The poet did not merely put the tales into the mouths of the pilgrims—on the contrary, he motivated the tales by the situations, by the interplay of personality, and by the characters of the tellers, sometimes correlating a whole group of stories through the recurring discussion of one striking theme.

In this connection, however, it might be well to call attention to the danger that lies in the frequent use of the terms "dramatic," and "drama." While the *Canterbury Tales* are "dramatic" in the looser sense of the term, they are not "drama." (Drama as a form comprises dialogue, impersonation, and action, with no narrative or description by the author save in stage directions.) Of course Professor Kittredge would be the last person in the world to think of the *Canterbury Tales* as anything but narrative, however vigorous the action, conversation, and characterization may be; but is there not some danger that a few of his less careful readers may here find a suggestion that will result in their adding to the already sufficient body of loose thinking about the mediaeval drama?

With regard to Professor Kittredge's interpretation of the Marriage Group, he has of course argued his case ingeniously and cogently, and his belief has received wide acceptance. At the same time it is only fair to observe that a certain amount of caution ought to govern the interpreter when he begins to see more than immediately meets the eye. Especially is this caution necessary when other students, applying the same methods, begin (as they have begun) to extend the group until it threatens to include practically all the tales, with almost as great a show of validity to their arguments as to those of Professor Kittredge.

There is naturally opportunity for discussion of some of the author's views. Professor Manly's judgment concerning the badly proportioned *House of Fame* and the digression in *Troilus* (*Kittredge Anniversary Papers*, pp. 76-77) should be compared with Kittredge, p. 115. There is also room for diversity of opinion as to the length and nature of the conclusion of the *House of Fame* (cf. Kittredge, p. 103, with Manly, p. 81).

It is unfortunate that Chaucer should be alluded to as a "collector" (pp. 30, 45) and an "ambassador" (p. 6). Chaucer was a controller of the customs, not a collector. His duties as controller were merely to supervise

and check the collectors (cf. Hulbert, *Chaucer's Official Life*, p. 42). Nor can such foreign errands as Chaucer went on, or the manner of his going, entitle him to rank as an ambassador. Either he was attached in a subordinate capacity to the train of some important person, or the mission was such as scarcely to call for the application of any such title (as when, for instance, he went to Genoa to negotiate for the establishment of a Genoese mercantile factory in an English port).

The imaginary "command" from John of Gaunt that Chaucer write the *Book of the Duchess* (p. 37) is also unfortunate in that, occurring in a book by so authoritative a writer as this, it is highly likely to give the impression that the suggestion is far more authoritative than it is; the "request" or "command" is of course a fanciful surmise. Chaucer may very well have written the poem entirely on his own initiative. That the connection between Chaucer and John of Gaunt was far less intimate and far less influential on the career of Chaucer than has generally been supposed, has been shown by Dr. Hulbert.

While Professor Kittredge does not discuss the chronology of Chaucer's poems, his implication is that the group of problems involved has been practically settled. Perhaps to question the conventional Chaucerian chronology may subject the questioner to a charge of undue skepticism. Nevertheless it ought to be strongly emphasized that most of the conventional chronology rests on no more than speculation and surmise. A cautious examination of all the evidence yet adduced reveals many a tenuous hypothesis, such as that Chaucer was too busy at a certain period to have finished a certain work by a certain date; such as a "feeling" that one work is "better" or more mature than another, and is therefore later; or such a questionable identification as that of the *Parliament of Fowls* as an occasional poem on Richard II's marriage (cf. Manly, *Festschrift für Lorenz Morsbach* [*Studien zur Englischen Philologie*, L], pp. 279-87).

While it is a sheer delight to have such a book as this unencumbered with footnotes, occasionally the author's allusiveness leaves something to be desired. For example, the reference to Sercambi's *Novelle* (p. 149) is not sufficiently definite to be explicable to a student or teacher far removed from sources of bibliographical information (Karl Young, "The Plan of the *Canterbury Tales*," *Kittredge Anniversary Papers*, pp. 405-17).

The book's style is incomparable. It rings with the forthright positiveness of the author, and sparkles with the incisive phrases that his students know so well.

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